MMR_0535 Sowerby Smith Australia

Sowerby Smith MMR 535

My initial introduction to model trains was when visiting a cousin and seeing his Hornby Doublo trains on the carpet in the front room of his house. I would have been about 9 yrs old and hooked for life! As a teenager, Dad and I built a 8x4 layout over a bed in our spare room. Originally Hornby Doublo 3 rail converted to two as time went on. Dad did the conversion to 2 rail.

High school and art college and working in London as a photographer got in the way of my train hobby. After moving from the UK to Sydney, Australia, in 1970, it was not until a few years later that by now married to Jenny we moved into our first house.

A two story townhouse that my involvement with modelling restarted. Numerous visits to local hobby shops eventually resulted in starting to build a 4x2 N Scale US prototype layout. A couple of years later having learned a lot about building good trackwork the move to HO US prototype began.

We moved to our current house at Chatswood a Sydney Suburb in 1979. We had taken nearly a year to find a train room with a suitable house around it!

Work on the layout commenced within a few months on the original part of the layout L girder construction with ¾ inch furniture plywood sub roadbed. The original version of the layout was a 2 level loop with duck-under entry to the centre.

It did not take long to realise that was a bad mistake as my knees started to get very uncomfortable with all the ducking under. So an extension with 2 loops allowed walk-in access. I decided to model SP as more stuff was available here and the layout is set in Northern California and Southern Origan due to the terrain ie. mountains.

I do not model specific locations though I do pinch a couple of prototype names. Transition era 1950-55 with end of steam and first generation, diesels lots of 40 foot cars to make the layout appear larger.

I enjoy building stuff and numerous Roundhouse kits and brass locos rolling stock kits and kit and scratch built buildings. Just after Joining the NMRA, Jenny and I decided to rebuild the house; around the train room of course.

After 7 months of being away from the layout, I removed the plastic sheet to expose fantastic mould growth all over the layout. The L girder construction is very robust with no warping despite months of soaking. The good part was more space and the visible layout is approx. 38 x 11 feet and an extension for a reverse loop of anther 5 feet.

The original parts of the layout are now 45 years old and still works fine. I have also been modelling for the last 20 years in O scale helping build a large UP layout for a friend.

I have also made rolling stock and a Kemptron Wabash Mogul kit for myself.

I first joined the NMRA Australasian Region in 1986 after a friend mentioned he had been to one of our Region's conventions. The first month I attended was to a marvellous layout by Geoff Nott, a local legend of a modeller, and I was entranced.

At that meeting, I first met John Saxon, MMR our Region founder, and NMRA Region representative on the US [National} board. We became great friend and before I knew it [next week), I was Vice President!

Several terms as Region Vice President and multiple President terms finishing after 25 years with my last roll being Public Officer.

My pathway to MMR was over a very long time and with the cajoling and encouraging from many members and especially our Region Achievement Chair Gerry Hopkins, MMR.

I finished up with the following certificates: Association Volunteer, Master Builder Scenery, Electrical, Master Builder Structures, Association Official, Author and Motive Power. My MMR was awarded in March 2014. Additionally, I received a Fellowship Award in 2012 for service to the NMRA from the US Board.

Over the years, I have made many great friends due to my involvement with the Association and it has been very enriching experience. The fellowship aspect of the Association is it's greatest strength.

Sowerby Smith, MMR

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